

## Infant Mortality

Infant mortality is defined as the death of an infant before his or her first birthday. The infant mortality rate is an important indicator of the well-being of infants and their adolescent mothers because it is associated with a variety of factors, such as maternal health, quality of and access to medical care, socioeconomic conditions, and public health practices (1).

■ During 1995–97 among infants born to adolescent mothers there were 10.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. The Healthy People 2010 objective for infant mortality among all mothers is no more than 4.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births (2).

■ Overall, infants of the youngest adolescent mothers (13–14 years) had higher infant mortality rates than infants of mothers 15–19 years of age (17.1 versus 10.4).

■ Infant mortality rates vary significantly among racial and ethnic groups. Non-Hispanic black adolescent mothers had higher infant mortality rates than other adolescent mothers (14.4), nearly twice those of Hispanic mothers (7.6).

■ Among infants of non-Hispanic white and Hispanic adolescent mothers, mortality rates decreased with increasing maternal age; infant mortality rates plateaued among infants of non-Hispanic black mothers 16 years and older. Non-Hispanic white and Hispanic mothers 13 and 14 years of age were approximately twice as likely to have an infant death as mothers 19 years of age; for black mothers this relative difference was 1.4.

■ Infant mortality is associated with a variety of factors affecting the mother's health during pregnancy and the infant's environment and health care during the first year of life. It is important that adolescent mothers receive timely prenatal care and avoid risky behaviors such as the use of alcohol and tobacco during pregnancy. Maternal smoking during pregnancy

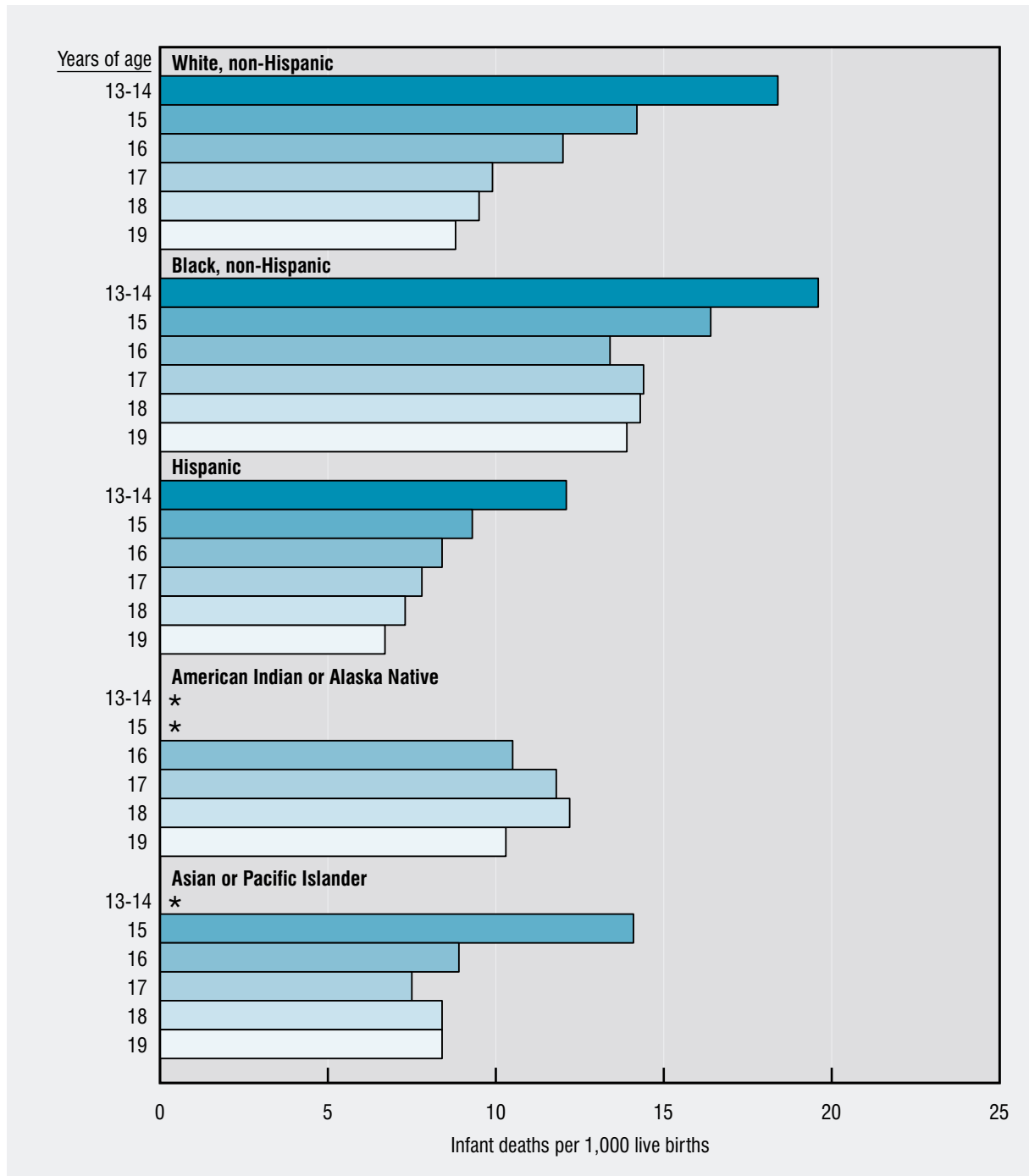
increases the risk of infant mortality (3). In 1998, 18 percent of mothers 15–19 years of age reported smoking during pregnancy, the highest percent of any age group (4).

■ Among infants of adolescent mothers, as for infants of all mothers, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the leading cause of infant mortality after the first month of life (5). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends putting infants to sleep on their backs because of the lower risk for SIDS associated with this position.

## References

1. Kleinman JC, Kiely JL. Infant mortality. Healthy People 2000 statistical notes; vol 1 no 2. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 1991.
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3. Wilcox AJ. Birthweight and perinatal mortality: the effect of maternal smoking. *Am J Epidemiol* 137:1098–1104. 1993.
4. Ventura SJ, Martin JA, Curtin SC, Mathews TJ, Park MM. Births: Final Data for 1998. National vital statistics reports; vol 48 no. 3. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2000.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Assessment of infant sleeping position—selected States, 1996. *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 47(41):873–7. October 1998.

Figure 22. Infant mortality rates among infants of adolescent mothers 13–19 years of age, by maternal age, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, average annual 1995–97



\* Infant deaths in this age and race group were too few to be considered reliable and are not shown.

NOTES: See Data Table for data points graphed. For further discussion, see Appendix I, National Linked File of Live Births and Infant Deaths.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Linked Files of Live Births and Infant Deaths. See related *Health, United States, 2000*, tables 20–25.